241 cereal, as well as other crops already mentioned are grown. The lowest and warmest spots of the plateau are usually used for various types of millet-sorghum, gesho (hops). Coffee grows wild or is purchased on the market, as are bananas from the lowland. After a few years of cultivation, a field may be left fallow for five or more years.

[17] The Amhara's irrigation and terrace farming resemble [46] those of Yemen, not of Africa. Farming is man's work, not [23] woman's. The one-handed plow is drawn by a yoke of two oxen, encouraged by a long fibre whip. The Amhara rerely uses other animals for drawing the plow.

Fallow land or new bush is broken during the dry season. A heavier-than-usual iron plow point is purchased from the Falasha ironsmiths, affixed to the scratch plow, and the area, after preliminary burning, is scratched many times at right angles. The stubble and weeds are then piled and burned. But for the actual plowing and seeding, the beginning of the rains is awaited.

312 Irrigation canals are completely washed out in the rainy season, and must be rebuilt in each dry season. Terracing is less common than irrigation, but on occasion mountain farmers of long residence do build low walls of rock and mud on hillsides to prevent severe washouts and landslides during the rainy season.

● 243 Tyēff (Eragrostic abyssinica; Poa abyssinica) deserves the latter Latin name, for it is the mainstay staple of Abyssinia, except in the south. It is an annual indigenous grass with seeds of pinhead size, cultivated

243 as a cereal grain in Abyssinia since ancient times. It is known in the USA as "teff lovegrass" and is sometimes grown for hay or pasture. In Abyssinia it is the most important cereal.

Tyĕff seeding takes place, by broadcasting, at the beginning of the rainy season in June; it is ready for harvest in October-November. Sheep are driven over after the seeding to cover the seeds and thus insure maximum germination. Harvesting is done by hand cutting. The grain is made into sheaves about 6 inches thick. Sickles [412] made by the Falasha ironsmiths are simple affairs, a quarter-circle of toothed iron blade fitted into a wooden handle. Tyĕff flour is made by the housewives, who grind it on a stone mill (wofcho) by hand on the mano-matate principle.

There are tow major kinds of sorghums (durra) grown as staple cereals, "mashella" and "zengada"; a third, "dafussa" is used more for making beer and in poor times. Many of these are sown when the early light rains come in March-April. The stalks of mashella are used to build simple temporary huts; other stalks become fodder. As [857] soon as the heavy rains are over, boys with slingshots and whips are stationed in the fields and on lookout posts atop the "umbrella tree" to fight off the birds who are very fond of sorghum, especially the "mashella".

Mashella (Andropogon sorghum) is of yellowish-white color, and the most desired of this family. The seed is much bigger than tyĕff. It is often ground and mixed with it for injera-baking. Known in other parts of Africa as

243 "Kaffir corn", in Abyssinia it is the second most important cereal. Interestingly enough, the Amhara has a form of crop insurance, by sowing mashella with "bahēr mashella" (lit. the sorghum from overseas), possibly imported by the Portuguese. In Shoa province, it is called "boqolo". A whitish type of mashella called "tenqesh" is liked for its stalk, which is eaten like sugar can, offerred to a special friend or as an honor.

Zengada (also called "bulē mashella") is a reddish, darker variety of mashella, grown as crop insurance for birds do not like it as well. (Zengada is Eleusina multiforma).

Dagussa(Eleusine coracana or Eleusine tocusso) is a very dark millet, grown as an emergency crop and used as an ingredient in beer. Poor people mix it with tyeff for injara.

Maize (Zea mays), the "bahēr mashella" already mentioned, is often grown also in the same field as cotton (gossypium) on lower elevations of the plateau to "keep the cotton warm and protected from wind", according to the Amhara. Maize kernels, since they are biggest, are boiled with peas to make a filling meal in the lenten season.

Wheat (Triticum spp) called "sendē" is considered a luxury grain (e.g. to make wafers for the church eucharist). It is grown on higher altitudes, in smaller quantities than the other cereals mentioned, and is seeded and harvested somewhat late. A special dark rich soil called "walka" is considered necessary; also plowing 4-5 times.

Barley (Hordeum spp), called "gebs", one of the major

243 crops, and the only one grown all year, thus the most often irrigated. It grows well even on semi-eroded soil, unlike wheat. It is consumed in emergencies, and more usually used in making beer, despite its comparatively poor malting qualities. It is provided as fodder for the mule, the most important animal for human transportation, to give it "strength". Barley becomes more important for human consumption when the rainy season has been shorter than usual. In that case, the grain is soaked in water and then crushed with wooden mortar and pestle to remove the husks without reducing the grain to flour. After drying in the sun, the broken grain called "gebs qolo" is roasted and eaten Some is always in the hut, in case guests should come. The same crushing procedure is followed for preparing malt for barley beer. Late, irrigated barley called "aja", is considered tough but "giving strength", though dishonorable for a guest, and also causing complaint from women that it is "hard to pound" and "good only for mules".

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Oats and rice as special crops are almost unknown to the Amhara. Oats ("gencha", "aramamo", "qwa"), considered wild, are gathered with barley and used in beer.

In view of the importance of cereal crops, it is not surprising that the farmer refers to them collectively as "teru", which means "good", while garden crops ("debala") which enjoy a lesser appreciation, are not included in this concept.

427 804 Rent, tribute and taxes were paid per "madiga", the clay water pot used to measure it. Although this procedure is no longer followed, rent is still quoted in terms of "madiga".

243 of "madiga".

311 The term "tyëff" also has a projection. Good, fertile, fat land is still classified as "läm tyëff", in distinction to "tyëff" land, meaning average usable land for cereals.

Mashella is used as a concept in the following proverb:

539 "(Both) the seed of mashella
and the stalk, are good"

This is to say that if the parent had good qualities, the son will be a "chip off the old block."

Numerous distinctions are made in the types and qualities of each of the cereals. Among tyëff the farmer distinguishes "bunnen" which grows and matures rapidly even in Mäskäräm immediately on the end of the rainy season. In barley, the "aja" is disliked because of its coarseness, but its green fields, irrigated, stand out among the sun-yellowed stubble in the dry season and provide a pleasant sight, as well as year-round crops. "Ferey gebs" is a fine choice barley, and "sänäf qolo" (a long-eared variety) is roasted as a daily condiment.

248 Cotton, called "tet", is grown in lowland areas. To separate the husks, a roller of scrap iron is preferred; it is worked on a rock. When rain has occurred during the maturing of cotton, its quality is lowered. The typical Amhara prefers to buy his raw cotton on the market and have his wife or female servant clean, card and spin it. Then he calls in the weaver or takes the spun cotton to him, to make a toga.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

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alluvial soil - "borbwara märet", rich silt carried by rivers and brooks.

infertile soils - "qoda märet" dries too quickly after rains;
"arbacha märet", reddish, after erosion, infertile mounds;
"gebgaba märet", harvest withers at stalk before maturity;
"gergera märet", useless to plow, better leave for wild fruit.
"fech märet", abandoned land, leave for pasturage.

hard-to-penetrate - "gewchacha märet", plow cannot penetrate readily,
"gombore märet", sandy but very rocky, hard to plow,
"chancha märet" rocky terrain, where rain does not penetrate well.

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The preferred early rain is the light, intermittent but penetrating "zeg yalä zenab", not the heavy continuous downpour that occurs later. Fast-growing barley, called "bällega" after the "bälg" season, is sown first, during the light rains of March, for it can be harvested 3 months later, just before the heavy rains, to help tide the people over until the main harvests. This is very important because of the traditional hesitancy of the farmer to store crops. Historically, he would rather have it almost ready on the stalk, and would rather risk a crop failure than

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1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

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251 expose a full granary to the mercy of the feudal lord and passing soldiers.

Before threshing can begin, about a month after the end of the rainy season, a flat, circular area is marked out with rocks. Cowdung is stamped into the wetted floor, and the sun hardens the ground into cement-like consistency in one day. This threshing floor, called "awdema", is usually big enough to accommodate at least 4 oxen that are now driven over the grain, abreast but not tied, walking in a steady circle all day long, a procedure called "mabärayät". On the third day, winnowing (called "mäshin") takes place, by means of wooden pitchforks cut from a hardwood bush without carpentry (thus usually two-pronged), and a semi-circular winnowing fan about 2 feet long and not quite as wide, made of oxhide that has been stretched on a wooden, semi-circular frame. The threshed grain is covered overnight with branches, to protect it from wind.

On the fourth day, the grain is swept up with simple whiskbrooms made of stalks (e.g. those of wild oats). All these procedures are done as quickly as possible, partly to protect the crop during this stage of maximum vul-
754 nerability from birds and baboons, partly because of fear
609 of the evil eye. If an unrelated stranger passes at this time, the farmer sprinkles him with water to avert the possible evil eye. Formerly spitting was the procedure.

In that season many small threshing grounds dot the landscape, especially on river flood plains. Here the plots are usually not more than 100-200 yards long. A minimum team of three men can usually do the job described in four days. Only one person is needed to drive the

243 patient oxen. If the farmer has no ex-slave retainers, his wife may help in the harvest. Even young boys help, particularly in protecting crops. The direction of the breeze [461] is carefully observed before winnowing. Work proceeds from sunrise to sundown (from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M.), with a rest from noon to 3 P.M., the hottest time of the day. At that [263] time the women bring barley beer, enjara bread, and a special condiment prepared from crushed "nug" oilseeds called "anäbabär".

Threshing by sticks instead of oxen is done in harvest of the "nug" and this may require some additional helpers.

241 Oil plants are cultivated and of considerable impor-
262 tance in the diet. They are considered field crops rather than garden crops:

"nug" (Guizotia abyssinica), the black Niger Seed, which is the most used vegetable oil of the Amhara. Travellers take it along, mixed with spices, as a staple. It is used in many items of diet. After crushing, the oil cakes are used for fuel (not fodder).

Flax seed (Linum usitatissimum), called "talbä", the second most common oilseed, of light brown color, consumed in similar ways and in drinks. It is not raised for the fiber, which is considered fodder or fuel.

Castor bean (Ricinus communis), called "gulgwas" or "qachma". This is not a field crop as much as nug and talba, and not as much of a staple. Tan- [281] ners use it for lubrication of skins. The emperor has urged increased production, but there

887 preoccupied with the immediate demands of life. The culture pattern
812 encourages the shemagalye to give much time and effort to this wonderment, for it belongs to his prime role and social duty at this stage: the accumulation of wisdom. The church does not interfere with this wonderment and its expression, partly because it has not bothered to establish dogma on many subjects.

A. The Natural Universe.

821 In many ways the Amhara concept of the universe resembles that of
[[71]] early medieval Europe, plus understandable similarities to the Middle East and Africa. Some conceptualizations are elaborations from the Biblical universe, readily recognizable because almost always the Geez language is used to express them. Other conceptualizations are animistic, and usually employ Cushitic terminology.

The universe is regarded as a Ptolemaic system, with the earth as the fixed center around which the sun turns. A distinction is made between the physical world, called simply "arät mäzän" (lit. the 4 corners); and the world populated by all creatures, "aläm" (lit. world, in the Geez language). The persistence of this traditional view of a flat earth is so great that even Amhara schoolteachers in the modern elementary schools in the provinces, who are required to teach a spherical earth, privately admit that they don't believe it themselves!

Heavenly bodies and metereological phenomena are interpreted as directly related to human events. Venus is called "astärboshäsh" or "astäryo", (lit. the one who gives hunger and then flees), because the planet appears in the very brief dusk, when the heat of the day is over and one gets hungry. Because Venus is "fleeing and inconstant like a woman", she is given the feminine gender.

821 Considerable attention is given to the moon ("chäräqa"), for it
243 is believed to cause the ripening of the grain after the sun has

821 caused the tender plant to sprout; therefore, cereal grains just
243 beginning to sprout are called "charäqwa". Full moon is a good time
484 to travel, avoiding the heat of the day especially in the hot lowlands where travel in daytime is almost impossible; also it is safer since approaching or ambushing bandits can be more readily seen than earlier or later in the lunar cycle.

Dawn is personified, regarded as a young day being suckled ("täbba") by the warm and expansive sun, after chill of the night on the plateau.

787 However, the working out of astrological systems is left to the däbtära, who collects his knowledge from "secret" books (in Geez), more often actually from apprenticeship and extracurricular activities while in church school, and uses it in writing especially powerful and expensive amulets.

821 The various kinds of rain are almost as important to the Amhara as snows to the Eskimo and sands to the desert Arab. For the Amhara with his primitive plowing, has to wait until the right kind of light rain loosens the sunbaked soil; and his simple hut is little protection from the heavy rains. He therefore studies clouds and wind direction in relation to topography. The fine and penetrating rain ("zeg yalä zenab") permits the use of the common scratch-plow, and seeding. The heavy rainy season brings downpours, and is also accompanied by strong gusts of wind ("wächafo") and tornadoes. When the thunderstorm ends and a rainbow appears, it seems as if the earth had been reprieved, so that the rainbow is called "marwam mäcalät" (lit. the jealousy of Mary; i.e. her intercession, in the Geez language). However, when a rainbow occurs while it is still raining, the interpretation is more animistic, for it is regarded as an unnatural event, heralding the moment at which wild

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

231 a Christian, because the cows that they keep belong to
563 Christian gentlemen of the country of the Barnagais. These Moors have nothing else for their labour than the milk and butter which they get from the cows, and with this they maintain themselves and their wives and children. On some occasions it happened to us to sleep near these Arabs, they accosted us to ask if we wished to buy cows, and for the price allowed us to choose them. They say that these
[484] Moors, and headmen who go with them, are all robbers under the favour of the lords to whom the cows belong, and so only large caravans travel. The revenues of this
792 monastery are very large; those which I saw and heard of
631 are, chiefly, this mountain in which the monastery is situated,
361 of an extent of ten leagues, in which they sow much millet,
● [243] barley, rye, and all these pay dues to the monastery, and they are also paid on the herds. On the skirts of this mountain there are many large villages, and most of them belong to the monastery, and at a distance of one or two days' journey an infinite number of places belonging to the monastery, and are called *Gultus* of the monastery, which means *coutos* or *celeiros*,[1] according to our Portugal. Don Rodrigro the ambassador and I were going on the road to the Court, a good five days' journey from this monastery, and arriving at a town which is named *Caina* we kept Saturday and Sunday in a small village which might contain twenty people, and they told us they belonged to the monastery of Bisan. Besides that town there were a hundred villages all belonging to the monastery, and that in which we halted was one of them. We were also shown
651 many of the others, and they told us that every three years
631 they paid a horse to the monastery, and that each village
792 did this, which makes thirty-three horses every year. And in order to be certain of this I went to ask it of the *Alicazi* of the monastery, which means the auditor or major-domo,

[1] *Couto*, an asylum, an enclosure; *celeiro*, a granary.

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

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Preferred
[243] cereals cannot be grown here, instead sorghum, finger millet, and white tef (Eragrostis teff; an indigenous, [635] tiny-grained cereal) are produced. Moreover, the civil administration of the kola is less effective than in the highlands. Of the three zones, kola is the most sparse- [162] ly populated, and the only one to contain a substantial [563] indigenous non-Hamitic population. These are a Nilotic [567] people, horticulturalists living on the province's western periphery. Highlanders refer to them by a putative tribal nomer, "Shankella", and, until recent times, obtained their domestic slaves from this population. Even now, Nilotes living in the highlands are popularly known as bariya, "slave".

Weyna dega lands are located between 1800 and 3000 [136] meters. This is parkland beyond the range of the ano- [243] pheles mosquito, and ideal for growing preferred cereals, [231] wheat and red teff. Here, as in the other zones, agriculture is complemented by the raising of sheep, goats, and chickens for food; cattle for meat, milk, and plowing; donkeys to carry burdens across the broken plateau lands; and horses and mules as mounts.

Dega lands are the sections of the plateau which [243] extend beyond the 3000 meter mark. In their lower reaches, wheat and red teff are grown, but at higher altitudes [233] barley is the dominant cereal. The lands above 4000 meters cannot be cultivated, although some are used for grazing.